UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/899
S/25360
5 March 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-seventh session
Agenda item 143
THE SITUATION IN BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-eighth year

Letter dated 1 March 1993 from the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to present to you the attached letter, dated 24 February 1993, addressed to Senator Joseph Biden, Chairman of the European Affairs Subcommittee of the United States Senate Foreign Affairs Committee (see annex).

The purpose of my letter was to inform the Committee about the position of the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina with respect to the Vance/Owen peace talks, which is often confused with the position of the Muslim part of the Government. The issues concerning internal matters of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including internal political arrangement under the auspices or with the necessary arbitration of the international community, are to be negotiated among its three peoples: Croats, Muslims and Serbs. While the Government as a whole supports the Vance/Owen peace process, there is no single position of the Government on the current stage of the Vance/Owen talks. Each of the three negotiating parties have their own position on the proposal as it currently stands.

I also advised the Committee that the mandate of Mr. Alija Izetbegovic as President of the Presidency had expired. This is to demonstrate the immediate need for the international community to assist not only in protecting Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity but also in assuring that the country is governed in accordance with its democratic and constitutional principles.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 143, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mile AKMADZIC
Prime Minister

ANNEX

Letter dated 24 February 1993 from the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Chairman of the European Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee of the United States of America

This letter concerns the testimony of Mr. Haris Silajdzic, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, before the European Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on 18 February 1993. As Prime Minister of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I wish to advise you that Mr. Silajdzic's testimony as a whole did not represent fully the position of the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The position was established in its November programme by consensus in the Government and the Presidency functioning as Parliament. As set forth in this programme, the Government fully supports the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee, Mr. Cyrus R. Vance and Lord David Owen, and their pursuit of a negotiated solution to the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We seek to achieve a just peace through this process. In our view, a just peace includes: (1) the return of all refugees and displaced persons who wish to return to their homes, (2) the establishment of an international criminal tribunal to try those accused of war crimes, (3) non-recognition of changes achieved by aggression, including ethnic cleansing, and (4) payment of reparations to those who were damaged as a result of the war.

The Government has also determined that Bosnia and Herzegovina can be politically arranged as a decentralized State. The proposals concerning establishment of provinces are an acceptable solution if not based only on ethnic principles, but rather on a combination of ethnic, geographical, historical, economic and other principles developed through negotiations. Our programme includes full equality for the three peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Croats, Muslims and Serbs - as recognized by the Constitution of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Government has also agreed upon a delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is empowered to negotiate with other countries on all matters that concern our foreign relations. The delegation, which represents the Republic in discussions with other countries, is a delegation made up of two Croats, two Muslims and two Serbs. The issues concerning internal matters, including internal political arrangement under the auspices or with the necessary arbitration of the international community through the United Nations or the European Community, are to be negotiated among its three peoples. This is the case with the Vance/Owen peace talks, where three parties negotiate and no one party is the Government.

I therefore ask you to keep in mind that the testimony of Mr. Silajdzic on the current stage of the Vance/Owen talks and on the national history of Bosnia and Herzegovina is representative of the view of some Muslim members of the Government, and not of the Government as a whole.

Furthermore, please be advised that the mandate of Mr. Alija Izetbegovic as President of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina expired on 20 December 1992. He is presently without constitutional authority to act in that capacity. The Presidency, and not the President alone, is the representative body of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only the Presidency can invoke constitutional emergency powers, not the President alone. The President is merely primus inter pares. Like Mr. Silajdzic, Mr. Izetbegovic does not speak for the Presidency as a whole with respect to the current stage of the Vance/Owen talks, but only as one Muslim member of the Presidency.

I regret having to be so blunt in light of the immense suffering of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Muslims. I am nevertheless compelled as Prime Minister to bring the foregoing facts to your attention.

My Government welcomes the support of the United States, and we are very grateful for such help. I will be available to discuss these matters and other issues of concern to you.

May I request your kind assistance in circulating this letter to your honourable colleagues in the United States Senate and entering this letter as a record of your esteemed Committee.

(Signed) Mile AKMADZIC
Prime Minister